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AUTHOR Metham, John
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INSTITUTION Macquarie Univ., North Ryde (Australia). School of Education.
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ABSTRACT

Stemming from a major evaluation study of the Mt. Druitt Early Childhood Project, this paper presents a selective list of behaviors compiled by teachers to describe Year One (6-year-old) children in their classrooms according to six designated areas. These areas are (1) logical development (number, spatial, measurement, problem solving, sequencing): (2) language development (vocabulary, sentence formation, communication, expressive/interpretive, word recognition, reading comprehension): (3) general knowledge (health hygiene and safety, science, social procedures, social studies): (4) strategies (questioning, persists, reasons, predicts, divergent, imaginative): (5) attitudes (cooperative, initiates, independent, sociable, responsive): and (6) perceptual/motor/physical abilities (perceptual, fine motor, gross motor, health). (Author/MP)

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DISCUSSION PAPER

Teachers' Ratings of Year One

Children's Behaviours

John Metham

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PREFACE

This paper reports upon the implementation of a teachers' rating scale of Year One children's behaviours within the classroom. In essence, it stems from the earlier rating scales (P.O.S. and K.R.S.). However, in response to what is taken as valid constructive criticism (referred to in the paper) its structure has been altered to be relatively open-ended. In doing so, a wealth of behavioural descriptors has emerged providing a valuable data bank for both teachers and researchers. This bank details a comprehensive behavioural profile of the children in the Project as they behaved in Year One.

John Metham

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Introduction

This paper on the teachers' ratings of Year One Children's Behaviour stemmed from a major evaluation goal of the Mt Druitt Early Childhood Project. This goal stated that the Project intended

> "to specify overall and separately for different kinds of children, the short-term and long-term, intended and unintended effects on pupils, family and school of the five programs instigated by the Project".

As part of this objective a range of cognitive, achievement, social and psychomotor data were collected. This paper reports the development of a teacher rating form for use with Year One (6 year old) children. Specifically information about the children was needed in the following areas:

a) Logical Development: number, spatial, measurement, problem solving, sequencing
b) Language Development: vocabulary, sentence formation, communication, expressive/interpretive, word recognition, reading comprehension
c) General Knowledge: health, hygiene and safety, science, social procedures, social studies
d) Strategies: questioning, persists, reasons, predicts, divergent, imaginative
e) Attitudes: cooperative, initiates, independent, sociable, responsive
f) Perceptual/Motor/Physical: perceptual, fine motor, gross motor, health

These areas were regarded crucial to evaluate since they tended to be common interests shared across the five early childhood programs in the Mt Druitt Project.

Data from each of these areas was collected by the use of standardised and Project developed measures. However it was believed that these data should be validated by teachers' ratings of the children in the same areas. By so doing, it was argued, it would be possible to validate the previously collated data. The judgements made by people, such as teachers, who are in a position to observe an individual over time or under specified conditions, represent one technique for quantifying personality characteristics. These judgements, in the form of ratings, can be especially useful when applied to a specific characteristic either observed directly or inferred from case studies of the subject. Whenever research concerning teachers' ratings has been done, the findings have supported the use of such ratings. The use of teachers to rate children's behaviours is important since teachers have the opportunity to observe children in many and varied situations over a long time span. In this way children's characteristics may be determined; what may be enduring and what may be transient.

Development of the Instrument

In constructing the instrument (see Appendix) the areas of interest referred to above were identified and behavioural categories reflecting these areas suggested. However, unlike an earlier rating scale, the Preschool Observation Schedule (see Discussion Paper No.2) which was highly structured, the current instrument was relatively open-ended. A major criticism by teachers of the earlier rating scale was that from a universe of behaviours, thirty behavioural items were arbitarily selected. These may be appropriate or may be completely inappropriate to the children being described. Teachers expressed a need to choose the behavioural descriptors they considered best suited the child being rated.

Below is presented a selective list of the behaviours compiled by teachers to describe the children in their class according to the six designated areas of interest.

1. Number:
   * Still in early experience stage. Free play with rods, big blocks, unifix cubes, value boats, centicubes etc.
   * Only just acquiring one to one correspondence.
   * Has trouble remembering numbers and operations.
   * Needs more help with recognising numbers above ten and consolidating numbers under ten.
   * Counts only to twelve. Can master addition and subtraction with counters after being shown at each lesson.
   * Quick recall of number operations to five. Knows numbers to fifty well.

2. Spatial:
   * Only knows circle and triangle.
   * Compares shapes of things he and his friend have made.
   * Only knows 'back' and 'front'. In drawings cannot plan objects in correct position.
   * In drawings with instructions puts objects in wrong position.

3. Measurement : Nil

4. Problem Solving :

* Can't see how to solve a problem. Even after a problem is solved with assistance can't repeat solution.
* Uses concrete materials to solve problems.
* Tends to solve problems without concrete material.
* In group time if a question is posed tries to answer it with some kind of hypothesis.
* Talks out problems, can give reasons why things happen or why she does things.

5. Sequencing:

* Cannot put objects in order according to some principle.
* Can put in order of size, thickness etc.

AREA B. LANGUAGE

6. Vocabulary

* One of our best "news" participants. A constant stream of interest objects are brought to be shown and talked about.
* Orally he is quite capable of communicating his thoughts, news and answers to questions.
* Above average in language oriented activities. Enjoys class discussions.
* Uses very descriptive word sometimes in news talk and knows a lot about things around him.

7. Sentence Formation

* Has little understanding and few sight words which are major problems. Teacher works individually with her three times a week on sight words and constructing sentences.

* Has good ideas. But these get muddled up when putting onto paper. Child relates ideas to adult helper (teacher, parent) who assists in correct wording and writing. Child copies into book during written expression.

* Stories very short but use of words improving. Not interested yet in extending his stories.

* Makes long stories with quite a bit of detail. Works out a lot of words for himself in sentence-maker.

8. Communication

* Avoids news time. Asked parents to encourage him to bring along something of interest to show and tell. Sent on messages around the school.

* Can explain very well what he is doing in play situations and knows exactly what he is doing and what he needs.

* A good talker. Expressions, gestures very good. Holds interest of listener.

9. Expressive/Interpretive

* Newstime, if a question is asked appropriate to his family, he tries to tell us how it can be related to his own experiences.

* Uses good vocabulary and voice levels. Gives detailed sentences also usually about family.

* Enjoys talking about his experiences especially camping, fishing etc. with father.

* In news, tells detailed stories in sequential order.

10. Reading - Word Recognition

* Has trouble using letter sounds and picture cues to attack words.
* Only just beginning to use phonetic clues, mostly relies on sight vocabulary.
* Can give first sounds but cannot hear middle sounds
* Finds blending hard but knows single sounds well.
* Blends well and knows both single and double sounds.

11. Reading - Comprehension

* Cannot usually recall what he has just read. Also after listening to a story finds it hard to recall details from the story e.g. names of characters.

AREA C: GENERAL KNOWLEDGE

12. Health, Hygiene and Safety

* Knows safety rules well, shown in discussion of such and also in excursion walk taken recently.
* Has too much of the wrong foods - e.g. fifteen biscuits for recess one day. Diet consists of ice-cream, sausage rolls, cakes etc. Overweight boy who is sluggish in class. Teacher checks lunch regularly allowing only three biscuits. Also discussions on good food.
* Great improvement in foods eaten from no food at lunchtimes to salads he makes himself.

13. Science

* Interested in 'aviation'. Discusses planes with detailed information.

* Has amazed me with his natural aptitude for science. Has explained air pressure, why moon is seen as a crescent shape sometimes.

* Has brought creatures in glass jars to school.

* Very observant of things around him. Interested particularly in nature. This was seen in 'Australian Animals' theme studied recently. Brought books from home.

* Enjoys anything involving animals and plants. Wants to go to Africa and become a warden at a reserve. Keeps cluckers at home. Leads group discussions on care of animals. Is "official" animal care person for class.

* Shows little interest in discovery and in an effort to overcome this she has been put in charge of indoor plants. One of the volunteer mothers takes her for nature walks to collect interesting items.

14. Social Procedures

* Obeys school rules

* Plans well for things and carries out plans.

* Easily forgets routines and class procedures. To change this behaviour he has been put in a position of responsibility. Gives out story books. Helps to remember which books are out by checking cards for lending library.

* Seen in shop activities takes over role of mother in particular. Knows sequence of events in shopping.

* Very helpful to Mum. Likes to do a lot for her as he has a young baby sister. Knows a lot about how to look after her e.g. what she eats, how to bathe her etc.

* Assumes the role of others easily in role playing. Uses the right voice levels too. Can copy a character from a story well.

15. Social Studies

* Recalls facts on news talk easily. Remembers a lot of information a few days later.

* Has brought in maps of different countries.

* General knowledge is very good. e.g. knows all of the royal family and where they live.

AREA D: STRATEGIES

16 Questioning, enquiring behaviour

* Lacks this greatly. Sits back and watches during most lessons. Sometimes will respond when asked a question but never volunteers a question.

* Shows he wants to find out about things often above his level e.g. mechanics. Teacher offers challenging project work to do (e.g. Finding out by reading, writing and experimenting) and encourages the child to wider horizons (e.g. new words to use, possibilities that could occur).

* Asks about words that are new to him, what they mean. Also with new things in the classroom asks questions about them.

* Wants to know why things happen, asks children such questions as "Well, why can't we have more windows in Lego construction?"

17 Persists

* Lacks concentration. Takes much longer than others to write stories in written expression. Gets distracted.

* Still needs to be reminded about task completion. Will leave a task till later then find there is no time left.

* Always likes to finish what he begins especially in play situations; in particular construction work.

* If he really likes an activity he will sit by himself and even work through recess to finish the task. Also likes to give finished task to teacher for a present or to display around room somewhere.

* Settles to story writing and number work well. Often last to finish because he's never satisfied he's done enough. Loves to make stories longer and more interesting

18 Reasons: Nil

19 Predicts

* In stories can tell what is going to happen next. Also in plant growing e.g. what might happen if plant has no water etc.

20 Divergent

* In construction toys he usually comes up with something unusual.

* His drawings are very detailed involving unusual topics. He likes to make things at home out of paper or paddle-pop sticks and using glue. Brings them in to show and these are displayed. At school his construction work is quite original.

* When posed with a problem thinks of many different alternatives and possibilities.

* Will often come in with a new idea something to do or make, and organise his friends to get it done.

21 Imaginative

* Shows no ability to think of imaginative explanations. If he doesn't know the obvious answer just shrugs shoulders "I dunno". Teacher has attempted to explore child's interests and encourages him to talk about them. Teacher relates work to these experiences.

* Enjoys making up situations, dramatic ideas and relating stories. Portrayed "Peter Pan" with actions in detail.

* Shown in shop activities. Sets a situation easily. Has interesting stories in creative expression when another role is assumed.

AREA E: ATTITUDES

22 Co-operative

* A little too bossy for some children. Likes things her way in creative play. Doesn't like to share a lot. Seen in play and in simple things such as using rods and counters in number.

* Sits by himself. Has to be isolated from others on many occasions.

* Aggressive boy who fights if he does not get his own way. Sulks frequently and blames other children.

* Rarely plays with other children in a social game. Either wanders away on his own or wanders off with one other boy. To overcome this behaviour, his mother has prompted him to bring interesting things to talk about during news or show/tell. He discusses these then chooses a group of children to play with interest items.

* Has a lot of fights with other boys. Doesn't seem to get on with the group he wants to belong to.

* Very eager to come to school. Works hard and gets along well with the other children.

* Most co-operative during independent activities. Will either initiate or follow in a group depending on the task. Enjoys school.

23 Initiates

* Mostly a listener and follower of others. Timid at times. Stands in background.

* In play he is a leader e.g. in kite-making he made the ideas up and showed other children how to make it.

* Initiates when using either our things or her own. Likes to be in charge and see her own ideas being used by the group.

* Brings his toys in allowing certain children to play with them, then makes up games for them as well.

24 Independent

* Lacks confidence in things like reading and so needs others around her. Can do it but looks to others for confirmation of what she is doing is right.

* Does need to be motivated to begin tasks. Constraint checks needed. Gets distracted by other activities.

* Needs a friend to work with.

* Extremely capable of working alone and often desires for "peace and quiet" (Quote).

* Depends on the task. If it is something particularly interesting he will work very hard by himself at it. Wanted to show the teacher an example of his work so he sat and wrote a very good story and then illustrated it.

25 Sociable

* Inclined to draw attention to himself by obstructive behaviour.

* Moody - from very friendly and sociable to very aggressive toward peers.

* Very popular - has a pleasant personality.

26 Responsive

* Loves helping the teacher before school to prepare the classroom.

* Helpful in solving classroom problems. Carries out teacher's given instructions. Remains close to teacher. Enjoys adult company.

* Gives reasons for actions, tells and describes things. Not just yes/no answers.

* Responds physically as well as verbally. If she is happy with something you say she will jump up and hug or kiss you.

* Likes to explain things to us in great detail. Talk about things he finds and makes.

* Always tries in circle time to talk up and make an attempt at answering a question.

AREA F: PERCEPTUAL/MOTOR/PHYSICAL

27 Perceptual

* Has trouble with reversals starting second line of story from wrong side of page.

* Has trouble writing second sentence of two sentence story. Usually starts second sentence from right-hand side.

28 Fine Motor

* Takes care in all written work and especially in craft. Colouring-in, writing and cutting very neat.

* Tries to improve but pencil pressure, spacing and shape are problems.

* Able to draw from memory in fine detail, i.e. in perspective. Drawings displayed around room.

* Colouring poor. Writing poor. Provided with lots of creative activity work in pasting corner, manipulation toys, games such as quoits.

29 Gross Motor

* Has poor co-ordination, sometimes a little clumsy, finds it hard to balance on balance beam. Finds catching and also hitting a ball difficult.

* Very poor in all areas. His running and even walking are very awkward.

* Excellent. Opportunities given for her to lead a group in P.E. activities demonstrating skills such as skipping.

* Very proficient in all gross motor skills. Enjoys outdoor play immenseley.

30 Health

* Has been plagued with severe ear blockage, draining, infections which have caused hospital visits and doctor appointments leading to frequent school absences. Also this has led to her tuning out into a world of her own and so quite often hasn't heard instructions.

* Has a weight problem which limits her capabilities in skipping and balancing.

* Wears glasses. Needs to be down at the front of the class and close to the teacher when doing work.

The above list of behaviours indicates a common understanding by teachers in their responses to the instrument and there tended to be a shared behavioural interpretation of the various terms.

Use of Instrument

Following extensive discussions with the teachers an appropriate format and lay-out for recording observations was arrived at (see Appendix). Teachers were requested to rate individual children as being (+) "above average" and (-) "below average" in each of the areas described above. Table 1 summarises teachers' typical behavioural descriptions when using the instrument.

A few clarifications may need to be made in order to interpret the table. Problem solving (4) was taken to mean the need for children to use or not use concrete materials to solve algorisms. Children were scored "above average" if they could solve problems "in their heads". That is they did not need to use materials. Sentence Formation (7) was described in terms of written sentences while Communication (8) was described in terms of spoken sentences. So it was possible for a child to be scored "below average" on Sentence Formation yet "above average" on Communications. Teachers talked about children becoming "muddled", "confused" when transferring from the spoken word to the written word. Though grouped under General Knowledge (C) the teachers responded to Health in terms of application. In other words, children did actually apply the health rules they had learnt. Initiates (23) was quite clearly interpreted as a social behaviour (leadership) rather than task orientated behaviour. Independent (24) would be its collateral in terms of task. That is, the child initiates an activity without the need of adult or child support. Responsive (26) was the only item with an indication of being ambiguous. Some teachers took it to imply helpfulness while others took it to mean the verbal answering of questions. This ambiguity could be easily resolved if use was to be made of the instrument. The other items on the table are, it is hoped, fairly self-explanatory.

TABLE 1: Summary of Teachers' Ratings of Children

	Area	Interpretation
A.	Logical	
1	Number	Counting to 50; operation addition and subtraction
2	Spatial	Recognition of square, circle, triangle, square
3	Measurement	No behavioural descriptions made
4	Problem Solving	Without the need to use concrete materials
5	Sequencing	Ordering according to property of size (seriation)
B.	Language	
6	Vocabulary	Productive range i.e. number of words used
7	Sentence Formation	Ability to write at least two sentences in sequence
8	Communication	Adequacy of oral expression to convey meaning
9	Expressive/ Interpretive	Relating family interests
10	Word Recognition	Phonic approach (blending of two sounds); sight vocab.
11	Comprehension	Oral recall of characters and events from story
C.	General Knowledge	
12	Health	Application of health, hygiene, safety rules esp. diet
13	Science	Knowledge of especially 'animals' and 'outerspace'
14	Social Procedures	Compliance to rules
15	Social Studies	Knowledge of current events
D.	Strategies	
16	Questioning	Initiating behaviour, questions about new words and things
17	Persists	Task orientation; completion of activity
18	Reasons	No behavioural descriptions made
19	Predicts	Foretells events either in story or real life (plans growth)
20	Divergent	Task orientation - originality, novelity of construction
21	Imaginative	Elaborate role play
E.	Attitudes	
22	Cooperative	Prosocial behaviours
23	Initiates	Relates to leadership, organising of children
24	Independent	Task orientation; initiation and completion of task without supervision
25	Sociable	Popular
26	Responsive	Helpful; or verbal answering of questions
F.	Perceptual/Motor/Physical	
27	Perceptual	Reversals
28	Fine Motor	Colouring in, writing, cutting
29	Gross Motor	Co-ordination in sports
30	Health	Problems associated with ears, eyes, weight

Table 1 summarises the shared interpretations made by the teachers across the six areas. It indicates the terms of reference used by teachers when discussing Year One children on a relatively open-ended instrument. It may be of interest to point out that no behavioural interpretations were written for both Measurement (3) and Reasons (18). This may be because that with the many interest areas teachers are requested to monitor these two may be overlooked. Certainly with a number of the other categories teachers had much to say with many detailed descriptors. This may suggest a press from schools to give priority to such categories as Number (1); Problem Solving (4); Vocabulary (6); Sentence Formation (7) and Word Recognition (10).

Also, of personal interest, was the awareness teachers revealed of perceptual/motor/physical disabilities; specifically in relation to weight problems and the subsequent action of recommending diets.

It is subjectively obvious from the behavioural descriptors such as those referred to that teachers are sensitive to the characteristics of individual children and are capable of making astute evaluation. As Kamii (1971) points out, the teacher is in possession of important developmental knowledge and is perhaps the person best suited to evaluate children's behaviours within the classroom. When used in conjunction with other process and product data a more complete picture of the individual children should emerge.

Reference

Kamii, C.K. (1971) Evaluation of Learning in Preschool Education, In Bloom, B.S., Hastings, T., & Madaus, G. Handbook on Formative and Summative Evaluation of Student Learning. New York: McGraw Hill.

APPENDIX

MT. DRUITT EARLY CHILDHOOD PROJECT

1979

YEAR ONE YEARLY OBSERVATIONS

(YOYO)

Teacher Evaluation of Pupils

Name of Pupil: _____

AREAS/CATEGORIES	+/-	CHILD BEHAVIOUR	ACTION
A. LOGICAL 1. Number (counting, adding, subtracting) 2. Spatial (shape recognition, direction, position, comparisons) 3. Measurement (distance, use of units, estimation, size) 4. Problem Solving (cause/effect, prediction, deduction) 5. Sequencing (seriation, temporal order, logical order)			
B. LANGUAGE 6. Vocabulary (productive range, spontaneous variety) 7. Sentence formation (constructing and writing sentences) 8. Communication (expresses intention, reasons, methods) 9. Expressive/Interpretive (able to relate own experiences) 10. Reading-Word Recognition (word attack skills) 11. Reading-Comprehension (understands, recalls, details)			

AREAS/CATEGORIES	+/-	CHILD BEHAVIOUR	ACTION
C. GENERAL KNOWLEDGE			
12. Health, Hygiene & Safety			
13. Science (Physical & Natural)			
14. Social Procedures (routines and roles)			
15. Social Studies (events and roles)			
D. STRATEGIES			
16. Questioning, enquiring behaviour (asks questions, systematic curiosity)			
17. Persists (perseverance at tasks)			
18. Reasons 'analytical, explanations)			
19. Predicts			
20. Divergent (unusual products, originality)			
21. Imaginative (fantasy)			

AREAS/CATEGORIES	+/-	CHILD BEHAVIOUR	ACTION
E. ATTITUDES			
22. Cooperative (child-child interaction)			
23. Initiates (with both other children and adults)			
24. Independent (with regards to orientation to a task)			
25. Sociable (when both interacting with adults and children			
26. Responsive (in relation to teacher)			
F. PERCEPTUAL/MOTOR/ PHYSICAL			
27. Perceptual (discrimination, figure/ground reversals)			
28. Fine Motor (hand-eye coordination, colouring, writing, cutting)			
29. Gross Motor (catching, hitting, skipping)			
30. Health (debilitations which interfere with learning)			